

Responding to the Emotional Impact of Budget and Staff Reductions

EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE OFFICE

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Objectives

- **Identify realistic expectations for employees**
- **Prepare for employee's emotional response**
- **Increase understanding of the surviving employees' needs**
- **Awareness of available resources**

People as Resources

- Our competitive strengths come from efficient and effective use of resources by people
- The application of other resources is dependent on our having strong people on our team who are able to function as a team

Psychological Contract

- **Promise, unspoken of continued employment in exchange for loyalty and hard work**
 - Employees learn to depend on the organization for job stability
 - Actual budget and staff reductions are perceived and experienced as breaking the psychological contract

Survivor Syndrome

- **Symptoms:**

- Insecure about job
- Fear of the unknown
- Mistrust of management
- Uncertain of skills and abilities
- Lack of loyalty
- High stress levels
- Low self esteem

Survivor Syndrome

- **Behaviors:**

- Low productivity
- Aversion to risk
- Depressed
- Increased absenteeism
- Low morale
- Loss of pride in the organization
- Increased resistance to change
- Acts of sabotage
- Narrow minded

8 Phases Staff May Experience

- **Stability**
 - Represents the current state, the status quo
- **Immobilization**
 - The initial reaction to a negatively perceived change, often accompanied by an inability to relate to what is happening
- **Denial**
 - An inability to take in change related information because it doesn't fit into the current frame of reference

8 Phases Staff May Experience

- **Anger**
 - Frustration and hurt, often manifested through irrational, indiscriminate lashing out, usually at those in close emotional proximity
- **Bargaining**
 - People begin to negotiate to avoid the negative impact of change
- **Depression**
 - A normal response to major, negatively perceived change often marked by resignation, feeling victimized, a lack of emotional and physical energy and disengagement from one's work

8 Phases Staff May Experience

- **Testing**

- The new conditions are acknowledged, goals are redefined, and ways to succeed within the new framework are explored

- **Acceptance**

- People are now responding to the change more realistically, even though they still may not like it

–Adapted from *Managing at the Speed of Change* by Daryl Conner

Coping With Losses and Endings

- **Identify who is losing what**
- **Don't be surprised by overreaction**
- **Acknowledge the losses openly and sympathetically**
- **Expect and accept the signs of grieving**

Coping With Losses and Endings

- **Give people information, and do it again and again**
- **Define what is over and what isn't**
- **Mark the endings**
- **Treat the past with respect**

Keys to Good Listening

- Answer the person's questions as openly and honestly as possible.
- Sit calm and stay calm, even when the other person raises uncomfortable questions or uses an angry, hostile or suspicious tone.
- Listen patiently and be reassuring.

Keys to Good Listening

- Be present and attentive- or explain if you aren't able to pay full attention
- Listen for feelings as well as content
- Reflect back what you are hearing

Keys to Good Listening

- Use non-verbal listening responses to show your interest and empathy
- Ask questions to clarify what you are unsure about or don't understand
- Ask open-ended questions to encourage further discussion and explanation

Normalize Response to Change

- **Increase your understanding of what to expect so that you are prepared**
- **Use your listening skills**
- **Be prepared to offer resources if needed**

How to Offer Ownership of Change to Others

- Inform people in advance so they will have time to think about the implications of the change
- Explain the overall objectives of the change- the reasons for it and how and when it will occur

How to Offer Ownership of Change to Others

- **Be honest with the employees who may lose out as a result of the change. If possible alert them early and provide assistance to help them find another job if necessary**
- **Ask those who will be affected by the change to participate in the change process**

How to Offer Ownership of Change to Others

- **Keep communication channels open. Provide opportunities for employees to discuss the change. Encourage questions, comments and other feedback**
- **Be flexible throughout the change process. Admit mistakes and make adjustments where appropriate**

How to Offer Ownership of Change to Others

- **Demonstrate your commitment to the change. Indicate your confidence in their ability to implement the change**
- **Provide assistance, recognition and appreciation to those implementing the change**

The Way to Be in the Midst of the Change

- Be *knowledgeable* about the change process
- Be *understanding* of the impact of change
- Be *clear and frequent* in your communications

The Way to Be in the Midst of the Change

- Be *open* and *invite input* from those affected by the change
- Be *realistic* in your expectations
- Be *supportive* in your feedback
- Be *firm, yet gentle* in the exercise of your authority

Check Us Out

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Helping People Is Our Business

